for distribution of PDS commodities in a transparent and accountable manner by involving PRIs in rural areas and local bodies in urban areas.

The Government has also constituted a Task Force for checking irregularities brought to the notice of the Government and also for general inspection/monitoring of the implementation of TPDS and Antyodaya Anna Yojana in identified areas.

(c) and (d) There is no programme for consumers implemented through 'Welfare Council'. However, the Government provides financial assistance to establish one District Consumer Information Centre (DCIC) in each district of the country. The Centre may be set up either by Zila Parishad or Voluntary Consumer Organization (VCO) recommended by the concerned State Government/UT Administration. Under this Scheme, financial assistance of Rs. 5.00 lakhs is provided over a period of 3 years for setting up of DCIC to make consumers aware of their rights. So far, 34 DCICs in 18 States have been provided financial assistance from Consumer Welfare Fund.

PM's participation in Next SAARC Summit

946. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Hon'ble Prime Minister would be going to Pakistan to participate in SAARC Summit early next year;

(b) if so, what pre-emptive diplomatic steps are being taken to desist Pakistan for raking up the Kashmir issue;

(c) whether the question of gas pipeline through Pakistan for supply of Iranian gas to India is proposed to be raised in the meeting; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The matter is under the Government of India's consideration.

(b) Under Article X of the SAARC Charter, bilateral and contentious issues are excluded from the deliberations of SAARC.

(c) No.

(d) Iran is not a SAARC Member and gas supplies from Iran are not part of the SAARC agenda.

Pakistan's help to North Korea

947. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan is helping North Korea in its nuclear weaponry;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken at diplomatic levels to dissuade Pakistan in the matter of supply of nuclear weapons to North Korea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The U.S. State Department announced on October 16, 2002, that during the visit of Assistant Secretary James A. Kelly to North Korea in early October, North Korea admitted to having a programme to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. A *New York Times* report published on October 18, 2002 quoted US intelligence officials having stated that Pakistan was a major supplier of critical equipment for DPRK's clandestine nuclear weapons programme. The report stated that equipment such as gas centrifuges used to create weapons-grade uranium appeared to have been "part of a barter deal" beginning in the 90s in which North Korea supplied Pakistan with missiles in turn.

(c) The problem of clandestine transfers and acquisition of missile and nuclear technologies involving Pakistan is a matter of deep concern because Pakistan today is the epicentre of international terrorism. The adverse effect of such developments on India's security have been highlighted by the Government in its interactions with its interlocutors.